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FORMULA ONE: DREAM COMES TRUE FOR NEW KING NORRIS

McLaren's British driver Lando Norris navigates tricky test in season-closing Abu Dhabi GP on Sunday to clinch his maiden F1 crown

EMOTIONAL BRIT ENDS MAX'S DOMINANCE

A tearful Norris won the title by two points ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen, who relinquished his crown after four consecutive years, in a tense and emotional season-ending race dominated by strategy and tactics. Max, despite finishing on top of the podium, fell just short in the overall equation as Norris finished third to seal the deal | **P13**

CHAMP THRIVES UNDER PRESSURE

- The 26-year-old showed great discipline and patience as he executed his race under extreme pressure knowing that any error could gift the title to Verstappen or teammate Oscar Piastri
- A journey that began with kart racing when he was eight years old, Norris became Britain's first F1 world champ since 2020

423

NORRIS FINISHED WITH 423 POINTS WHILE VERSTAPPEN ENDED WITH 421

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Fireworks during dance performance likely caused blaze; nightclub did not have fire safety clearance; owners on the run; probe ordered

A videograb of the fire in Arpora in North Goa late on Sunday. Eyewitnesses said the nightclub did not have well-defined exits | EXPRESS

25 killed in blaze at packed Goa nightclub

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @Mumbai

A massive fire tore through a jam-packed nightclub in North Goa around midnight on Sunday, killing at least 25 people, including five tourists and 20 employees of the club.

The club, 'Birch by Romeo Lane' at Arpora, 25 km from Panaji, did not have the mandatory fire department no-objection certificate. Since the club stands in the backwater of Arpora river, a narrow bridge leading to it made it tough for panic-stricken tourists to escape, fire officials said.

A preliminary inquiry found that electric firework inside the nightclub was the likely cause of the blaze, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said, adding that he had ordered chief secretary Dr V Candavelou and DGP Alok Kumar to identify and act against government officials who allowed the club to operate without fire safety clearance.

The club's chief general manager Rajiv Modak, general manager Vivek Singh, bar manager Rajiv Singhania and gate manager Riyanshu Thakur were arrested by the police. Separately, police have launched a manhunt for the club owners — Saurabh Luthra and Gaurav Luthra, who've been named in the FIR.

At least 100 people were on the dance floor at the time of the fire. In an attempt to rush out, some visitors ran downstairs to the kitchen where they got trapped in the blaze along with the staff, said Fatima Shaikh, a tourist from Hyderabad. "There was a sudden commotion as the flames started erupting. We rushed out of the club only to see that the entire structure was up in flames," she said.

Officials said there were no proper exits to the premises.

Police have detained the sarpanch of Arpora-Nagoa Panchayat, Roshan Redkar, who had issued a trade licence to the nightclub in 2013.

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, among others, condoled the deaths. An ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh for the kin of each deceased and ₹50,000 for the injured were announced by the CM.

New rules for Goa clubs

Following the tragedy, the Goa administration has issued an order to all nightclubs, restaurants and bars to maintain a valid fire NOC, enforce occupancy limits, ensure working alarms, detectors and fire-fighting systems, use certified electrical setups and keep exits illuminated

Deeply pained by the tragic fire incident in North Goa resulting in the loss of lives. My heartfelt condolences. May they find strength during this difficult time. I pray for the speedy recovery

Droupadi Murmu, President

Rahul calls for fair probe

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, while extending condolences to the bereaved families, said the tragedy reflected a serious failure of safety measures and governance. "The authorities should conduct a transparent probe to ensure similar tragedies are avoided in the future." **P9**

PM to open Vande Mataram debate in LS today

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE penultimate week of the Parliament session is set to be very busy, with both Houses set to debate 'Vande Mataram' and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

On Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will open the debate on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram in the Lok Sabha, where he is expected to highlight several previously unknown facets of the national song.

The BJP has been allotted three hours for its interventions in the Lok Sabha, while the total debate time will span about 10 hours.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is expected to be the second speaker in the debate, which will also feature the participation of Congress Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Deepender Hooda, Manipur MP Dr Bimol Akoijam, and Praniti Shinde, among others.

The Rajya Sabha will take up the debate on Vande Mataram on Tuesday, with Home Minister Amit Shah leading the discussion. Health Minister and Leader of the Rajya Sabha J P Nadda will be the second speaker.

The debate on Vande Mataram is likely to see fireworks as the Congress and BJP were at loggerheads over the latter's allegations that important stanzas of the national song were dropped in 1937, which sowed the seeds of partition.

While inaugurating the year-long commemoration of Vande Mataram to mark its 150 years, Modi said a "divisive mindset" is still a challenge for India.

In response, the Congress said the PM insulted Vande Mataram, noting that Rabindranath Tagore himself had recommended adopting only the first two stanzas.

The Lok Sabha will take up the debate on SIR on Tuesday and Wednesday. Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi will speak on SIR on Tuesday. He is also expected to raise the issue of 'vote theft' and the accountability of the Election Commission of India.

During the debate on SIR, the Opposition members are also expected to raise suicides of Booth Level Officers reportedly due to intense work pressure related to the voter list re-verification drive.

Key opposition leaders including Congress's K C Venugopal and Manish Tewari, DMK's Kanimozhi, and Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav are also expected to take part in the discussions.

Passengers looking for their bags in the massive buildup of unclaimed luggage at IGI Airport on Sunday | SAYANTAN GHOSH

IndiGo flight ops stabilising, cancellations down to 650

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

AIR travel chaos due to IndiGo's operational disruptions continued on Sunday, though the situation appeared to improve with the country's largest airline set to operate 1,650 flights until midnight – up from 1,565 on Saturday and 706 on Friday.

This still resulted in 650 flights across the country being cancelled with hundreds of them delayed by hours.

In a statement, the Ministry of Civil Aviation said air travel operations across the country were stabilising.

"All other domestic airlines are operating smoothly and at full capacity, while IndiGo's performance has shown steady improvement today, with flight schedules moving back towards normal levels. IndiGo's flight operations are likely to reach up to 1,650 by the end of today (Sunday)," its statement read.

To ensure financial protection for passengers, the ministry directed IndiGo to complete refunds for cancelled or severely delayed flights by 8:00 PM on Sunday.

The ministry also asked IndiGo to ensure that no additional fees are levied for rescheduling travel impacted by cancellations.

On how much more refund was pending, an Indigo source said the process of calculating the amount to be refunded was still on.

The ministry also said IndiGo successfully delivered 3,000 pieces of baggage to passengers as of December 6. It had mandated a 48-hour deadline for delivery of luggage separated from flyers due to the flight delay and cancellation chaos.

In an update on the situation, Indigo said its on-time performance shot up to 75% on Sunday from 30% on Saturday.

The airline also said it will "root cause analysis" into flight disruptions.

Meanwhile, the DGCA extended the deadline for IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers to respond to the show cause notice to Monday 6 pm.

IndiGo sources said the airline would soon respond to the show cause notice. "We are readying our response by explaining the reasons that flights were cancelled and delayed and the steps we are taking to mitigate them," a source said. **P2, 12**

REFUNDS BEING PROCESSED

IndiGo has processed refunds of ₹610 crore so far against cancelled or delayed flights, and delivered 3,000 pieces of baggage to passengers as of Saturday, the civil aviation ministry said

Boosting ties with India top agenda of US official's visit

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

A top US official is scheduled to visit New Delhi and Bengaluru from December 7 to 11. The visit of US' under secretary of state for political affairs **Allison Hooker** is expected to sharpen the strategic focus of the US-India partnership at a time when both sides are navigating economic friction, geopolitical volatility and rapid technological shifts.

According to the US Embassy, Hooker will prioritise advancing the US-India strategic partnership, deepening economic and commercial ties, expanding American exports, and accelerating collaboration in emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and space exploration. Her visit comes amid renewed efforts in Washington and New Delhi to stabilise ties after weeks of heightened tensions over US' 50% tariff.

Hooker has been closely involved in India engagement in recent months. In September, she met Indian ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra, as both sides worked to ease friction over trade and energy issues.

In November, Indian public-sector oil companies signed a one-year agreement with US energy majors to import 2.2 million tonnes of LPG, roughly 10% of India's annual LPG imports. Then, India and the US finalised a $946 million sustainment package for the Indian Navy's fleet of 24 MH-60R Seahawk helicopters, strengthening defence industrial ties.

During her stay in New Delhi, Hooker will meet her counterpart Foreign Secretray Vikram Misri, and other senior officials to discuss regional security, economic cooperation and shared priorities in the Indo-Pacific. **ISRO VISIT: P2**

No buses, roads, students walk 14km to school and back

KARTHIK K K @ Mysuru

FOR more than 50 school and college students from Pachedoddi, a small village near Hanur taluk of Chamarajanagar district, education is a test of endurance.

With no bus connectivity and no proper road linking their village to nearby towns, students take a punishing 14 km walk every day. They trek 7 km to schools in Ajjipura, Ramanapura and Hanur, and another 7 km to return home.

The route winds through thick forest patches and stretches of uneven, unpaved mud roads that turn treacherous during monsoon.

The fear of encountering wild animals is ever present, as the area falls under the Male Mahadeshwara Wildlife Division, which recently reported the death of a tiger and frequent movement of wildlife.

CONTINUED ON: P6

BJP may move no-trust motion at B'gavi session

NAUSHAD BIJAPUR @ Belagavi

THE simmering power tussle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, which BJP claims has crippled the state's administration, is set to overshadow the 14th legislature session that is beginning at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha from Monday.

Though the leadership battle in the ruling party appears to have momentarily cooled, the opposition is preparing to move a no-confidence motion, hoping to politically capitalise on the unrest.

The three-way power struggle among Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar and PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi has invited sharp criticism from several quarters. BJP argues that governance has taken a backseat as Congress remains preoccupied in its internal power games. While Congress plays down the crisis, BJP is unlikely to let the issue slip, keeping the possibility of a no-confidence motion open in the early phase of the session. **P4**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah arrives in Belagavi for the winter session

EXPRESS READ

Gazette notification on unused liquor licence auction likely this week

Bengaluru: The state government is likely to issue the gazette notification on the e-auctioning of 579 unused CL-2A (retail liquor shops), CL-9A (bars & restaurants) and CL11-C (government-owned Mysore Sales International Limited - MSIL) licences "early this week", well-placed sources told *TNIE* | **P6**

After eight years, Kerala actress assault case verdict today

Kochi: Eight years after the 2017 abduction and sexual assault of a Kerala actress, the Ernakulam Sessions Court will deliver its verdict at 11 am on Monday. The survivor was assaulted in a moving car by a gang led by Pulsar Suni, who filmed the act; actor Dileep is also an accused | **P7**

Venkatesh Prasad swings this one right, elected KSCA prez

Former cricketer Venkatesh Prasad celebrates with his supporters after being elected KSCA president in Bengaluru on Sunday | EXPRESS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

FORMER India pacer BK Venkatesh Prasad was elected president of the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) after elections on Sunday.

Prasad emerged victorious with a margin of 191 votes against KN Shanth Kumar, who was backed by Team Brijesh that was led by former secretary of KSCA, Brijesh Patel. Prasad got 749 votes, while Shanth Kumar 558.

Prasad and others were part of the syndicate Team Game Changers, which bagged four key posts, including that of president, vice-president (Sujith Somasundar), secretary (Santosh Menon) and treasurer (BN Madhukar). BK Ravi of Team Brijesh was elected joint secretary.

During its campaign, Team Game Changers, which was supported by former cricketers Anil Kumble and Javagal Srinath, had made allegations of large-scale mismanagement of KSCA under Brijesh Patel and had accused him of "backseat driving". Patel, however, had rebutted the allegations. **P13**

IPL matches will not be shifted out of Chinnaswamy Stadium. We will ensure that the matches are held here — DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

GERMANY, TOO MANY

India suffered a 1-5 defeat against holders Germany in the semifinal stage of the ongoing Junior Hockey World Cup in Chennai on Sunday | PTI | **P13**